

Are there any spill reporting requirements?

Yes. Under federal regulations, it is mandatory to report spills larger than one pound (about two tablespoons) of mercury to the following state and federal authorities.

- National Response Center (NRC), 1-800-424-8802.
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Pollution Emergency Alert System (PEAS), 1-800-292-4706.
- Your Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). Call the SARA Title III Program to find your local LEPC, 1-517-373-8481.

In addition, the local health department within the jurisdiction should be notified of any mercury spills.

For more information contact:

**Michigan Department of
Community Health
1-800-648-6942**

**Michigan Department of
Environmental Quality
1-800-662-9278**

**Michigan Emergency
Management and Homeland
Security Training Center
1-517-322-1853**

or go to

<http://www.michigan.gov/mercury>

Mercury Spills for First Responders



What First Responders Should Know About Mercury Spills



First responders are sometimes called to the scene of a mercury spill. When it comes into contact with the air, mercury can vaporize at room temperature. The vapor is odorless, colorless and is easily inhaled by those present.

What is the risk of exposure to mercury?

Mercury is a neurotoxin. Very young children and fetuses carried by pregnant women are most at risk of harm due from exposure to mercury vapor. Mercury's toxic effects can be passed by blood from the mother to the fetus and can cause brain damage, mental retardation, incoordination, blindness, seizures and inability to speak. Children exposed to mercury may develop physical, mental or behavioral disorders, kidney damage and disorders of the digestive system.

For anyone, short-term mercury exposure can cause irritation of the eyes, nose, throat and lungs, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and skin rashes.

Long-term exposure can cause brain damage, memory loss, tremors, numbness in the fingers and toes, mood changes and kidney damage. Spilled mercury and a heat source can produce high concentrations of mercury vapor. Short-term exposure to these extremely high vapor levels can cause death.

What should first responders do when called to the scene of a mercury spill?

The primary role for first responders at a mercury spill is to size up the situation, remove people from the area, contain the spill and prevent the spread of contamination.

First responders are typically not involved in cleanup of the spill.

CAUTION!

Do not walk through the contaminated area without boot covers. Consider the use of additional personal protective equipment. For example: determine if respirators are necessary.

First responders can play an important role in response to a mercury spill by:

- ➔ Identifying the source and quantity of spilled mercury
- ➔ Containing the spill to prevent further contamination
- ➔ Ventilating mercury vapor to the outside air but only when it can be done without creating further indoor contamination.
- ➔ Calling the appropriate agencies.

What other agencies respond to mercury spills?

Local or state health departments, the Environmental Protection Agency Emergency Response Branch, HazMat teams and environmental cleanup contractors may respond to a mercury spill. These agencies help to evaluate and mitigate the human health and environmental hazards. Monitoring is done using a specialized piece of equipment called a Lumex®. A list of agencies with Lumex® vapor analyzers is provided at www.michigan.gov/mercury.